Almost thirteen years have past since I ~~quit~~ ceased publishing Mission Messenger. Significant changes have been made in our humble way of living. We sold the house which we built and in which we had lived for twenty years. It was difficult for Nell to turn her back upon it and drive down the hill. For the first time since we were married we live in an apartment. Everything is so convenient. Stores, shops and restaurants are in walking distance, but we never walk to them. Even the hospital is close.

My books created the library at Oak Hill Chapel. Our furniture is in a room dedicated to the prayers of the saints. Everything seems to have worked out to the glory of the Lord. A very little while before we moved I located a building in the inner city. It had been a tavern throughout its history. A house of prostitution was run in conjunction with it. Someone had tossed a bottle of burning oil through the window. It went up in flames. One of the women, who was drunk, burnt to death. I got hold of the owner and persuaded him to fix it up. He did so and made a very attractive place of it.

We began gently enough but increased the opportunities as they became available. At present we have a Sunday morning meeting, one on Saturday for the boys and girls from five to twelve, and baseball and basketball for boys off the street on Friday evenings. There is clothing give-away Thursdays, Bible Study on Wednesdays, and Clothes sorting on Mondays. We permit welfare and citizen's groups to meet in the building regularly.

The Cornerstone, as we call it, has become a haven for many of the homeless. They know that there they can find understanding and rest. They are loved and cared for. None is treated as unworthy. We have paid their rent, telephone, gas and electric bills, and they appreciate this, although some are not as careful as they might be in their usage of these. This is as good a time as any to admit that the Cornerstone has done more for me than I have been able to do for anyone else. Through it I have met some of the best and closest friends I have. The fact that their clothing is tattered and torn, and dropping off, has little to do with their character.

We have been there five years. It seems incredible that it should be so long. In that time seven people have been shot to death within three blocks of the place. Much of the violence has been the result of drug-inspired incidents. We keep pressing on, believing that, as we teach and live, we will affect the community. The last two years it has been altered. Japanese, Chinese, Thailanders, and Filipinos have moved in from the land of their origin. Polish, Bohemian, Russian and Slotians have come. A great many blacks have infiltrated the neighborhood.

We are unfortunate that we are right in the midst of a high crime area. Prostitution is rife. But we have seen some of the perpetrators won to Christ and we rejoice in this to His glory. The fact is that the Cornerstone has been as great a blessing to me as it has to anyone. I love to work with the brethren relieving needs - physical, mental, and spiritual. We have a "big brother" program in which one of our men takes a deprived youngster and works with him to bring him up in his understanding. It is just great. Praise God!

I began life eighty years ago, on Sunday morning, in the home of a miner and his wife. Father had been to the third reader. Mother could not read at all. She had worked in the fields during her childhood days. There, in a little two-room cabin which was hot in the summer and cold in the winter, I grew up. God has made it possible for me to travel throughout the world, telling the message of His salvation. As I think back it seems impossible that it should have happened. But if it happened to me it could to anyone.

I am somewhat frightened by my many mistakes. For one thing I limited the kingdom of heaven too much. I thought of it as something that could be restored by man. I now realize how inadequate that concept is. I no longer believe there was a "church" in

God's program for men. I apologize for the time when I thought there was. A "church" has an office. It has officers. It has those who speak, perform rituals, and create increase superficially. A body develops naturally. As every member works it works, performs and grows.

Until the year 1611, Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will plant my assembly." When King James, of England, had his way, Jesus was alleged to have said, "I will plant my church." Since that time almost seven hundred churches have arisen, each one claiming that it is the one he planted, and that all of the others are fakes. The fact is that none of this is true, even though I once believed, and even preached it, God forbid!

With the coming of the Second Great Awakening in American history, Thomas Campbell, a quite humble Presbyterian, sat down in an ~~humble~~ attic and wrote a memorable paper. I have called it "the greatest uninspired document in history." I did that when I did not understand it. Now that I think I do I believe it even more strongly. It was submitted to his son, who concurred in it. It was not a means of dividing, but of uniting people across all party lines.

It represented only the thinking of one man's mind. It was much like Martin Luther's writing about salvation by faith. It was like John Calvin's dissertations, or those by John and Charles Wesley. Everyone of these was misinterpreted by his followers and so was the one by Mr. Campbell. It may be too late to regret that what each wrote could not have become the basis of discussion as friends and brethren. Now a lot of people think it is too late. I am not one of them. I realize how difficult it will be to discount the fightings, the rage, the expressions of disgust for 180 years but I believe the time is fast coming when it will happen.

The Lutheran Church has divided into various groups. So have the Presbyterian and Methodist churches. But, so have the "Church of Christ." This is proof that the "Church of Christ" is of human origin. It is not the body of Christ. It is a very firm conviction of mine that this is true. God's people are a scattered flock today. But they are a united group so far as He is concerned. And there is every evidence that they will come together in His divine love. It will be more difficult for some of them than for others. I am praying for it, lovingly and sincerely.

I have been attending prayer sessions at the Presbyterian and other groups lately and they have come a long way. I continuously tell them what Colonel Sanders told me coming back from San Juan, Puerto Rico. "You have to get a motto. Without a motto you are sunk, just as I was until I came up with 'Finger Lickin' Good.'" So I tell them that I adopted "Renewal through recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power." That's quite a mouthful for them to recall but it says it for me! Everywhere I have spoken folks have picked up "Renewal through recovery" and gone with it!

The fact is that most congregations are losing members in these days, some of them quite rapidly. They do not know what to do about it. St. Louis is a Catholic town. The last few years there has been such a sloughing off of members and candidates for the priesthood that it is noteworthy. Within less than a mile of where I live is Kenrick Seminary. Twenty-five years ago it was crowded. Now it is closing down and selling out. Large homes and condominiums are going up on the site.

The conditions cause frantic prophecies that the faith of Jesus is receding. That is foolish. Jesus said

of his congregation that "the gates of hell should not prevail against it." It is just true that men are no longer being fooled by a pseudo-faith. Our ears are constantly assailed by stories of Jesus coming because He has run out of steam. Just as in the year 1000 A.D. people sold their homes and possessions and assembled upon the mountains to await His advent, so with the coming of the year 2000 virtually the same thing is being urged.

If He wants to come praise His name. But I do not get excited about it. God has not finished with us as we would get. The harvest is ripening as well as the taxes. It is a great prospect which faces the Christian. I am told that one country after another is forbidding the presence of missionaries. Forget it! People from every such country line our streets today. Convert them and allow them to return home with the message. God is bringing together people from all over the world for us. We no longer need to leave our land and go to a part of the earth which provides hardship and sacrifice. We can talk to Japanese, Indians and Chinese. We can testify to Muslims.